

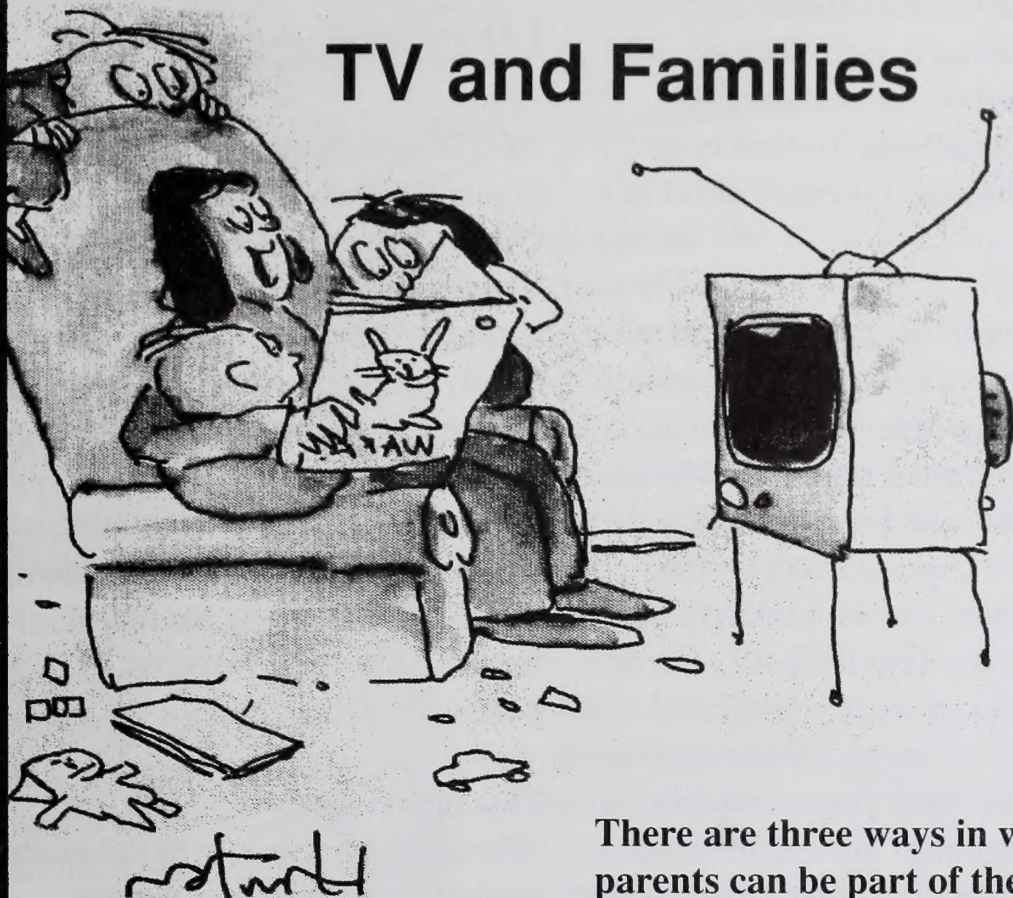


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NEWSLETTER FOR THE OFFICE FOR THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

TV and Families



There are three ways in which parents can be part of their children's TV experience:

- they can watch with their kids;
- they can influence what and how much kids watch;
- and they can talk with their children about TV.

"In a sense the term "effect" is misleading because it suggests that television "does something" to children... Children are sitting victims; television bites them. Nothing can be further from fact. It is the children who are the most active in this relationship. It is they who use television, rather than television that uses them."

Lyle Schramm and E.B. Parker,
Television in the lives of our children

A child's television-watching style has a lot to do with the parents' television-watching style. Parents who watch a lot of TV have kids who watch a lot of TV. In homes where family members talk about TV, children understand and remember more of what they watch.

Modern life keeps kids isolated in their homes for a variety of reasons. It may be too dangerous to play outside without supervision. Or the weather may limit outdoor activity. Parents need childfree time for relaxing or getting household chores done. Television is a safe and easy way to entertain children at these times. It's friendly and reassuring company for latchkey children and other kids who find themselves alone. It's a window on the world during a long, cold winter. It keeps kids laughing and out of the way long enough to get dinner on the table.

If a TV is on, children in the room hear and see it, even if they are very young or don't seem to be paying attention. Children watch what their parents watch, what their babysitters watch, what their sisters and brothers watch - just by being nearby.

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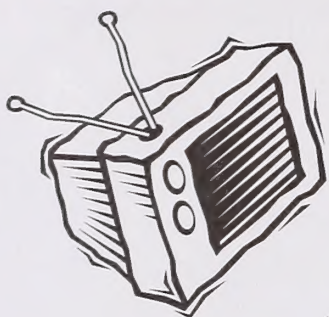
Reprinted from "Prime Time Parent", a publication produced by the Alliance for Children and Television and Health Canada.

When families got together in the past, they often told stories. The children listened, asked questions and learned about life in their family and the world outside their homes. Today, television watching makes up a large portion of the time that families spend together. Parents can help their children learn

that is an **active**, not passive. They will not have to be on TV, they can **agree** or **disapprove**, or **disapprove**.

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Parents have greater influence over their children than television. Just hearing an adult comment on a program seems

to have a big effect

on children. When an adult suggests a different way in which a plot problem can be worked out, it can really get kids thinking.

Parents give their children many rules and guidelines to help them navigate the world. Just as parents teach them to brush their teeth, to look both ways, to say please and thank you, and to make their beds, they can give children rules or guidelines for using TV as well.

Parents help children learn to make choices. We teach them to choose clothes that are right for the weather and occasion. We help them to choose healthy foods and stop them from eating only chocolate or only chips. We can also help them to make choices about what they watch on television and to sometimes choose to turn the TV off.

Parents are the experts on their own kids. They are usually the best judges of what will scare kids, what will keep them from their homework and when they need a chance to just relax. That means parents are the best ones to help their children manage television.

Different ages, different experiences and different personalities make each child unique and special. What is right for one child may be wrong for another. The rules or guidelines for watching TV can be different for every child in a home.

Every family is different and so are the ways in which they use and manage television. Parents may have formal rules about how much television kids can watch or what shows are allowed. Or they may be more casual, turning off the TV when a parent feels it has been on too long or when a program seems objectionable. Some families don't allow their young children to watch "fighting" shows. In other families, children choose their own programs, but a parent joins them to watch shows that might need some interpretation or comment.

The more kids watch TV, the bigger its influence on them, but thinking and talking about TV lessens its influence. Parents can get kids thinking and talking in quite simple ways:

- They can ask if the children like the show.
- They can encourage them to guess what will happen next.
- They can ask whether the things happening in the program could happen in real life.

AWAREness of Family Violence

ADT Alarm Systems has a program in place called A.W.A.R.E. (Abused Women's Active Response Emergency), which provides alarm systems to women in "high-risk", family violence situations. The emergency response alarm is connected to the door, the telephone and a pendant alarm, which can be worn on a necklace. When the alarm is activated, it initiates a priority response by police.

This program began in 1991 in Winnipeg, in response to the plight of abused and battered women. The A.W.A.R.E. system is now available in major centres across the country and has been in place in Calgary since 1992 and Edmonton since 1993.

Applications from "high risk" women are screened by a committee made up of local women's shelters, police and a representative from ADT.

In cases where women approved for AWARE do not have the resources to acquire or connect telephone service, the Alberta Government will provide funds to cover the cost of telephone arrears and hookup to ensure AWARE service can be provided and maintained.

DID YOU KNOW?

841-KOZ

This group of young people - *Eight for One Cause* - from British Columbia, is working to prevent youth violence. They travel around the province speaking with young people in schools, community groups... any place where youth are. 841-KOZ are part of the program "Take a Stand Against Youth Violence" to help young people throughout B.C. understand and act to prevent youth violence. Workshops, live drama and role plays help youth talk about the issues of violence and develop skills and steps to prevent youth violence in their schools and communities.

Watch What Your Children Watch

The Canadian Cable Television Association has released a new pamphlet "*Watch What Your Children Watch*". This brochure outlines children's developmental stages of television viewing and how parents can become more involved in what their kids are watching. Look for "*Watch What Your Children Watch*" enclosed in your local cable bill.

Justice Facts

Alberta Justice has developed a new booklet entitled "*Victims of Family Violence - Information and Rights*". The booklet outlines issues of family violence and how they relate to the justice system such as police intervention, the court process, sentencing and victim's rights.

The Federal Department of Justice has developed a new booklet, "*Abuse is wrong in any language*", for immigrant women who are suffering from spousal or family abuse. The booklet explains the Canadian Justice system, what behaviours are against the law and where immigrant women can seek help.

After You Tell

After You Tell is a 78-page booklet to guide persons with disabilities through the experiences that may occur after they report a sexual abuse incident. It was designed to meet the needs of people with developmental disabilities, problems with literacy, learning or communication or those who use Bliss symbols. The simple and clear language and illustrations describe the many situations, experiences, terms and definitions that are encountered in the process. *After You Tell* will benefit individuals with disabilities, parents, professionals and other individuals or agencies. Produced and published by SIECCAN, the Sex Information and Education Council of Canada. For more information, call 416-466-5304.

Parents in Crisis Society

The British Columbia Parents in Crisis Society is a group that works together to prevent child abuse. This support group offers support to parents in stressful situations such as a history of childhood abuse, raising a special needs child, death of a family member or loss of a job. The group discusses these stressful situations and how they can contribute to child abuse. Groups focus on improving communication, problem solving and parenting skills as part of a comprehensive approach to preventing child abuse.

Family Violence Prevention Month in the Community

Blockbuster Video and Smitty's Restaurants are showing their support for Family Violence Prevention Month by helping with distribution of the colouring book across Alberta. Over 40,000 colouring books will be given to children and their parents during November. Hopefully parents will take the opportunity to discuss the issues of family violence with their kids when they receive the colouring books.

Communities throughout Alberta are continuing to show their enthusiasm and effort to promote the family violence prevention message. So far, the requests for materials has more than doubled last year's requests for Family Violence Prevention Month. These materials include items such as posters, brochures and colouring books.

Substance Abuse and Family Violence

The Office for the Prevention of Family Violence and the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC) recently put their knowledge together to write two new brochures dealing with substance abuse and family violence.

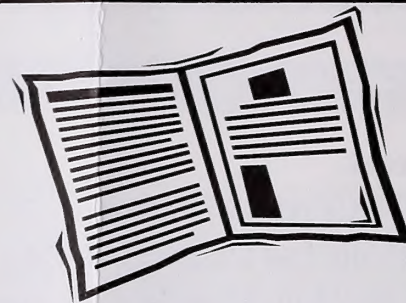
"Do You Need Somebody to Talk to?" is written for kids who may experience violence and substance abuse at home. The brochure explains the types of family violence and how the use of substances may play a part in this kind of violence. The prominent message of the

brochure is "Being drunk or high is NEVER an excuse for hurting someone."

"Substance Abuse and Family Violence - What's the Connection?" is written for adults in situations of substance abuse and violence. This brochure will be useful information for anyone who is abused or abusive and has a problem with alcohol or drugs.

This partnership with AADAC has had positive results and has allowed another important aspect of family violence to be addressed.

RESOURCE REVIEW



- *Speaking Out Against Violence* is a collection of National Film Board videos examining the various forms of violence against women and children. The collection is comprised of three different themes: *Survivors' Truths/Ending the Silence*, *Children's Voices*, and *Challenging the Systems: Voice from the Personal to the Political*. A resource for community workers, advocates, counsellors, educators and others dealing with violence, the collection consists of 24 videos in English and 7 in French. Prices of the videos are \$21.95 per video, plus tax. For sales information, contact the National Film Board at 1-800-267-7710.
- The Pincher Creek Chapter of the Canadian Mental Health Association has recently developed an educational colouring book called *"Taking Care: A Colouring Book About Personal Safety for Children"*. This colouring book was created to help children learn about personal safety and understand that they have a right to protect their body from things or people that may hurt them. For more information, contact Dana Connelly at (403) 627-3094.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Northeast

- The Crisis Association of Vegreville has received funding from the Wild Rose Foundation. This funding will go towards selected costs to operate an emergency shelter for two years.

Northwest

- The Grande Prairie Committee on Family Violence met November 14 in Grande Prairie and was extremely well attended. Locally, Family Violence Prevention Month is being recognized through presentation of a play by High School students at the local addictions centre, displays at the Health Unit, Library and College and a series of three feature articles in the Daily Herald Tribune. It was agreed that next year an ad hoc committee would be struck to deal specifically with events to highlight Family Violence Prevention Month.

Edmonton

- An elder abuse workshop was held on October 26, 1995 by the FCSS of Sturgeon. It was sponsored by the Sturgeon Seniors Association and the Sturgeon Further Education Council.
- The Edmonton Council on Family Violence held a Service Provider's Fair on November 16, 1995. Fifteen, 30 minute

presentations were scheduled and covered topics such as woman abuse, abuse in the deaf community, the impact of the Spousal Violence Follow-up Teams, cultural responses to family violence and more.

Central

- The Central Alberta Women's Emergency Shelter is continuing to explore options to provide treatment groups for women and children.

Calgary

- The Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter, in partnership with local organizations, has introduced "Non-Abusive Futures for Adolescents at Risk". This program works with teens aged 15 to 18 to educate them about conflict in relationships with friends, family members and dating partners. Teens that have a history of family violence or have exhibited violent behaviour are referred to this program. For more information, contact Valerie Price, Program Coordinator at (403) 299-9633.
- The Calgary Native Women's Shelter Society held an all-day workshop on "Healing and the Community" on November 22, 1995 at the Calgary Indian Friendship Centre. For more information, call (403) 531-1970.

South

- The Medicine Hat Regional Association for the Mentally Handicapped has developed a new manual entitled "Toward a Better Tomorrow: Helping Mentally Handicapped People Stop the Cycle of Violence and Abuse." The manual is designed to provide information on abuse, prevention and legal responsibilities for anyone who works with or knows someone with a developmental disability. The manual includes lesson plans, activity sheets, guidelines, references and resources and is available for \$7 by calling (403) 527-3302.
- Azimuth Theatre Productions of Edmonton presented "The Dungeonmaster's Handbook" on November 9th at the YWCA in Lethbridge. The play focuses on a young boy growing up in a violent home and how he tries to cope. Professionals were on hand to answer questions from the audience after the play.



Around the Province



All across Alberta, individuals, families and communities respond to Family Violence Prevention Month by planning activities. Schools hold special classes, community groups host speakers, plays are prepared and put on in community halls, articles are written for local newspapers and newsletters, guests appear on radio and tv talk shows to talk about their experiences. Thousands of items of educational material are shipped from the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence to assist in the activities and to provide a resource long after Family Violence Prevention Month is over.

FOCUS is published quarterly by the Office for the Prevention of Family Violence. We welcome your comments, suggestions, and contributions, especially news about events and activities in your community.

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Call toll-free by dialing 310-0000 from anywhere in Alberta.
Persons who are deaf or hearing impaired may call 427-9999 in
Edmonton, and 1-800-232-7215 outside Edmonton.

Family Violence Hurts Everyone. Let the Healing Begin.

